THE UNWRITTEN HISTORY OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BUILDING

Katharine F. Richmond
May 21, 1946

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THE UNWRITTEN HISTORY OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BUILDING

NOW FIRST MADE KNOWN BY

CHARLES ROBERT CORNING

President of the Society

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY

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Charles R. Corning

I have been impressed since the dedication of the New Hampshire Historical Society Building that there still remained a historical residuum worthy to be noticed and remembered. By this I mean a chapter in our annals that has never been written. While the history of the Society, from its foundation nearly a century ago down to the opening of our beautiful building, has been written and preserved for all time, and the description of the building and its charms and richness similarly treated, there seemed to be wanting something to complete the narrative. And that something I denominate a historical residuum. In the objective point of view nothing perhaps has been left unwritten, but subjectively the fact is otherwise. We know that we possess one of the really beautiful structures of the country, into whose construc-

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tion the willing and unlimited generosity of Edward Tuck invited the exquisite skill of the architect and the resources of the builder. But we do not know the history of the meeting of the minds that made this splendid work a reality to those who had hoped and dreamed in the days when the old building was our only possession.

Psychology, I think, played an unsuspected part in the result. At any rate there was meeting of minds, there was touching of souls responsive to beauty in things material. Call it as one may, this Historical Building as we see it did not spring into living beauty complete and perfect in the twinkling of an eye or at a nod of command. Things unseen to the common vision are sometimes the influence that makes possible works and deeds of surprising excellence and service.

The opening year of this century marked a crisis in the affairs of our Society by introducing a situation perplexing and disturbing. At the annual meeting a year or two before, the librarian, Nathan F. Carter, called the attention of members to the immediate necessity for more working space

and book room than were afforded in the old building. At the annual meeting in June, 1900, Mr. Carter again referred to the matter, and was followed by John C. Thorne who, understanding the conditions, emphasized his remarks by saying "A crisis has evidently come in the Historical Society. How shall it be met?" The President of the Society was William C. Todd of Atkinson, a man of scholarly instincts, an observer of men and circumstances, clear-headed, generous and judicious, a living asset of progress. Fortunate, indeed, was our Society in possessing a member endowed with Mr. Todd's characteristics. Experience and years had brought caution and well reasoned opinions on matters in which he felt a deep interest, and the Historical Society was an institution he loved. Accordingly he presented this communication to that June meeting:

"No object in New Hampshire is more worthy of support than the New Hampshire Historical Society. The most distinguished men of the State were active in its formation, and have been interested in its success. It was incorporated

June 14, 1823, and the first named of its incorporators was the eminent lawyer, Ichabod Bartlett. Its history has been an honorable one. Nearly every prominent man in the State has taken part in its proceedings; its published volumes have been much sought, and its collection of rare historical matter is of incalculable value and could not be duplicated. It has received from its friends many gifts, much wisdom, but little money, and is financially poor.

"For years its collections were moved from place to place as room could be found for them, and had no permanent home till some generous friends in 1866 purchased the building now occupied. This is now full, and the annual increase of books and pamphlets is 3,000. * * * It has been suggested that many books of little value could be disposed of and thus room provided.

"If such a plan were wise the relief would only be temporary. If the Society is to be preserved and to increase its usefulness, it seems as if a large fireproof addition must be placed on the land recently purchased adjoining the Society building

on the south, known as the Chadwick property. A crisis has evidently come in the history of the Society. How shall it be met? Wisconsin is a new State, but in the first year of its existence a Historical Society was established, which now has over 100,000 volumes, over 100,000 pamphlets, 10,000 bound volumes of newspapers, and is the pride of the State, with a world-wide reputation. A new building has been provided for its collections and those of the State Library at a cost of $640,000, and the State is in future to give it $15,000 annually, instead of $5,000 as in the past. The Massachusetts Historical Society has become rich by private munificence, and other state historical societies are well supported. The spirit of historical and genealogical research throughout the country is greater than ever before. Shall New Hampshire, one of the oldest and most respected States of the Union, prove worthy of its past reputation in all educational advance, and sustain its Historical Society? The least sum for a suitable fireproof addition is $10,000, and many thousands more should be provided. If not less than $5,000

can be secured from others before November 1, 1900, I will add five thousand dollars ($5,000)."

Here was an offer to cause thought and stimulate activity. Mr. Todd had cast a coin into the placid waters, creating the circle that, enlarging as it journeyed, finally touched the shores of France. In the meanwhile the friends of the Society responded to the President's offer and subscribed the desired sum, so that at the June meeting, 1901, the Treasurer reported a building fund of $10,290.89. A committee consisting of William C. Todd, Benjamin A. Kimball, Samuel C. Eastman, Joseph B. Walker, and Virgil C. Gilman was chosen to take into consideration the subject of new or enlarged accommodations for the library and rooms of the Society. At a meeting held January 13, 1903, this committee made a careful and well considered report which may be found in Proceedings of the New Hampshire Historical Society, vol. 4, p. 233.

The important conclusions in that report were these: the committee obtained an estimate of what could be done with $10,000; they found that

this amount of money would be utterly inadequate to build an addition on Main Street of a size and style that would be in harmony with the building, and be at the same time fireproof. "If such a building is desired," continued the report, "a much larger fund must be created." The committee agreed that an addition to the building was not desirable. Such an addition would be only a makeshift, and it would be far better in the long run to secure an entirely new building adapted not only to present needs, but so planned as to be enlarged to meet the future growth of the Society. "If the recommendations of the committee meet with the approval of the Society, time can be gained to secure the means for a better building than could be obtained from the present fund. Hopes are entertained by many interested in the welfare of the Society that such a result can be secured from efforts that are now being made." At an adjourned meeting held in February, 1903, a special committee was chosen to solicit additional funds for the erection of a new building. The committee named were William C. Todd, William P.

Fiske, William E. Chandler, Henry M. Baker, John F. Jones, and John C. Thorne. The building fund was soon increased to $20,000, through the efforts of Mr. Fiske and Mr. Thorne of this committee, Mr. Fiske securing a promise of $5,000 from Nathaniel Sherman Bouton of Chicago, and Mr. Thorne securing a like sum from the trustees of the John H. Pearson estate.

At the annual meeting in June, 1905, a committee previously appointed to procure plans for a new building on the old site offered its report and recommendations. A suitable building could be erected for $25,000, fireproof, well equipped and good for fifty years to come. Then followed this significant intimation which was to mean so much to the Society: "Information has, however, come to the committee recently that there is a possibility of a large gift for building and endowment which is worthy of our careful consideration. The committee, after duly considering this, has deemed it wise to recommend that further action in regard to the erection of a new building be postponed until the next annual meeting."

What had happened in the meanwhile to cause the committee to report that discussion of a new building should be postponed? Ever since President Todd, addressing the annual meeting in 1900, had called attention to the crisis in the affairs of the Society, the subject had wakened a lively interest in the minds of many of the members who were deeply desirous to help the venerable Society in its hour of distress. Naturally the idea of a new building on the old site was in the minds of many members, both because of long time association and the limited sum available for building purposes. Something in the meantime had occurred to stay the efforts of those who so strenuously favored building on the old foundations. What was it? The meeting received new light when a resolution was adopted declaring that "it is for the best interests of the Society to erect a building that shall be an ornament and credit to the State, that the present fund is inadequate, and that a committee of three be appointed to increase the funds and procure designs for a building of a classical character, so that the donors may

see the type of construction contemplated." Two members of this committee of three were Benjamin A. Kimball and Samuel C. Eastman, both of whom were heartily in favor of a more convenient and imposing location. It became evident that a project larger in scope and richer in detail than any heretofore discussed was assuming form and gathering strength, but no public disclosure had been made. Uncertainty concerning the future gradually disappeared, and there came the feeling of hope. The members favorable to the old site with a building fund of $30,000, realizing the meaning of what had occurred, abandoned their position and gave constant support to the new plan and the new location.

The unrecorded history of what took place from 1901 to 1911 began when Mr. Kimball exhibited to the annual meeting sketches and plans of the new building, and John C. Thorne offered this resolution: "That Benjamin A. Kimball, Samuel C. Eastman, Henry W. Stevens, Frank N. Parsons, and Frank W. Hackett be appointed a building committee, with full power to raise such sums of

money as may be necessary, in addition to the funds of the Society now especially pledged and available therefor, to purchase the land on the corner of North State and Park Streets in Concord, and to erect thereon a new library building on the plan submitted to the Society at this meeting, subject to such modifications as may be found expedient or necessary." The unrecorded or unwritten history during that period I will try to relate.

The publication of our proceedings has preserved the story of the construction and dedication of the New Hampshire Historical Society building which all may read and understand, but the undisclosed history of the undertaking, its inception and development, makes a story worthy to be heard. I have felt that the whole story ought to be told, and that the telling of the personal equation and its influence in this beautiful culmination was an indispensable part in the history of the New Hampshire Historical Society. How often have I been asked why Edward Tuck should build so splendid a memorial in a community no closer to him than Concord! What influences directed him to this

work? Influence, as we commonly interpret it, had little or nothing to do with Mr. Tuck's great donations. Influence in this instance was a generous and receptive mind communing with life-long principles of benevolence. In truth this man of profound good-will, of keen comprehension, of imagination, of sane views and application, and of trustful disposition was the ally of Mr. Kimball and Mr. Todd in their wonderful labors. Fortunately the correspondence, strengthened by recollections of the leading actors in the conception and development of the undertaking, has been put into my hands to be treated as I should determine. My beginning was this communication:

Concord, New Hampshire, July 4, 1917.

My dear Mr. Kimball:

If I am not asking too much, and I am not insensible to your many urgent occupations, I wish you would detail to me through your stenographer the beginning of Mr. Tuck's interest in our Historical Society building.

During my visit at Vert Mont Mr. Tuck more than once remarked to me that "you would never have had your Historical building if it had not

been for Mr. Kimball." With my respect for historical accuracy and truth I believe that this incident in your career ought to be made known and preserved. No man has created so imposing a memorial of work so splendid and enduring as you have created in Concord. "Circumspice" applies to you as it applied to Wren and St. Paul's. I hope I am not asking too much of you inasmuch as my request will serve history.

Very truly,
CHARLES R. CORNING.

Mr. Kimball mailed this note to Mr. Tuck who replied:

82 CHAMPS ELYSÉES,
PARIS, August 11th, 1917.

Dear Mr. Kimball:

Since I wrote you July 28th I have received your letter written at The Broads with your eagle quill on July 8th, dealing with Corning's enquiry for the early history of the project of a new building for the Historical Society.

I am sending you under separate registered cover Mr. Todd's first letter to me dated June 25, 1901, thus antedating apparently his first letter to you on the subject which was in October of the same year. I am returning it to you herewith, as also Corning's letter.

I am very glad Corning is taking up this matter, for the facts are worthy of record. To Mr. Todd

is due the credit of the inception of the project and awakening my early interest in it. To you is due the greater credit of having multiplied his efforts a hundredfold, and of having stimulated my interest in the matter, with the result that between us we have now, in the words of a representative of Mr. Lowell who, you say, had just been over the building for the first time, a monument "the like of which does not exist in the United States."

Corning quotes me correctly as having said that we never would have had such a building except for Mr. Kimball. It was only my faith in your wonderful taste and knowledge in artistic and architectural matters, and in your fidelity and zeal, heart and soul, in the work, that made me willing to place such a great sum of money in such an object. I can truly say that I consider it perhaps the happiest inspiration of my life to have gone into this enterprise, and to have brought it with you to so magnificent a conclusion, of which we and our successors will never cease to be proud.

With Mr. Todd's letter I am sending various pieces which I have numbered in sequence. They appear to be all that I have of special interest until the years 1906 and 1907. They will all explain themselves without further remark from me. You have, I am sure, a better recollection of our various conversations than I have. I wish now that I had kept a record, although perhaps it is of

no great consequence. I do remember that I did not wish to have Carnegie's finger in our pie. We have done fairly well without him; in fact you and I would not be willing to trade our building for any forty or more that he has ever erected.

Yours affectionately,

EDWARD TUCK.

William C. Todd, born in 1823, was not far from eighty years of age when the condition of the Society, so urgent and pressing, touched his loyal nature to the quick and compelled him to act. I have mentioned the offer made by him in 1900, and the words he delivered at the annual meeting of the following year. No one saw the critical situation clearer than he, or attempted remedial measures more resolutely. A graduate of Dartmouth, he chose the teacher's profession, becoming head of the academy at Atkinson, his native town, and later principal of the Girls' High School in Newburyport. From slender beginnings, by prudence and saving, Mr. Todd was laying up a modest competence, when Fortune introduced him to the Bell telephone, at that time a neglected foundling in the world of finance. The result was

that Mr. Todd became a wealthy man. No pen picture can present William C. Todd as he walked our streets and conversed with his friends, but the record has been written of his generosity in life and his benefactions after death. No reflective member of this Society can ever efface the picture of this aged man lying on his death bed, his mind alive to the necessities of his beloved Society, and his trembling hand composing an appeal to the one responsive soul in all the world who listened, and who finally wrought the miracle.

Mr. Todd's first communication with Mr. Tuck was this letter:

Atkinson, N. H., June 25, 1901.

Edward Tuck, Esq.

My dear Sir:

After much hesitation I have concluded to address you in regard to the New Hampshire Historical Society in which I have become much interested. It is one of the oldest of similar societies in the country, and has had the support of the ablest and most distinguished men of the State. Its origin dates back to 1823. March 3, 1823, a literary society of Portsmouth addressed an invitation to eighteen literary gentlemen of Rocking-

ham and Strafford counties on the subject, who met at Exeter March 13, when that able lawyer Ichabod Bartlett presided. It was decided to form a society, and a committee was chosen to invite gentlemen to meet in Portsmouth for that purpose. This was done, and the society was organized May 20, 1823, and incorporated June 13, 1823.

The first president was William Plumer, Jr., of Epping, at one time Governor, followed by Levi Woodbury, Ichabod Bartlett and other distinguished men of the State, who from the first have been among its officers, have given addresses before it, and contributed to its publications. To the efforts of men like John Farmer, Jacob B. Moore, Rev. Dr. Bouton, in connection with this society, we owe, I think, the large amount of valuable information acquired on the early history of New Hampshire.

Among the past members of the Society more or less active in its history can be named such men as Ichabod Bartlett, Charles H. Atherton, Samuel D. Bell, Jeremiah Smith, Isaac Hill, Ira Perley, Franklin Pierce, Amos Tuck, Rev. Dr. Peabody, Rev. Nathan Lord, Jeremiah Mason, John S. Wells, J. J. Bell and Charles H. Bell, both its Presidents for years, Joel Parker, and many others who have been leading actors in the affairs of the State, and few States can point to an equal number of men of whom it would have more reason to be proud.

Some of the collections of the Society are very valuable, and more would have been published if the funds had permitted, but the Society is poor. Its permanent fund, after 78 years, is only $11,400, whose income is almost fully restricted. There are about 170 members paying an annual assessment of $3. Only two gifts, I think, as large as $1,000 in money have been received in its whole history, though wisdom has been freely offered. It receives from the State $500 a year, which small sum is used to pay the Librarian, a retired clergyman and a Dartmouth graduate.

The Massachusetts Historical Society has just erected a new building at a cost of $195,044, and has invested funds of $182,339. One of the first acts of Wisconsin when it became a State was to establish a Historical Society, which has been its great pride, receives from the State an annual gift of $5,000 for its support, has a national, if not a European reputation, and the State has just erected for its use and that of the State Library a building at a cost of about $650,000.

The building used at Concord is an old bank building, is literally filled with treasures, among them sixteen volumes of unpublished letters of Daniel Webster, the gift of Peter Harvey. The Sabine collection of 7,000 volumes will come to the Society on the decease of an old lady of 83, and there is no room for them.

It has been impressed on me that no object in New Hampshire is more worthy of aid than this

Society, and its first great want is a new fireproof building. My means are limited but I have no family, and I last year offered $5,000 for this purpose if a like amount could be secured from others. This was done in small amounts, over 100 aiding, much of it from friends away from the State, and the Society now has a building fund of $10,000, but it needs $25,000 or $30,000 to build what seems to be a necessity if the Society is to continue its existence.

As one of the first settled States, New Hampshire offers a wide field for historical research, for which this Society seems to be the proper medium. May its good work in the past be continued.

I am a stranger to you, and have seen you only once. I was in 1860 a member of the examining committee at Dartmouth, and noticed you because I knew your father. I was born in the same congressional district, belonged to the same political party, became acquainted with him, and on my way to Washington, meeting him in Boston, he volunteered to give me a letter to Mr. Lincoln. Like all Dartmouth men I rejoice in your noble gift to our *alma mater*. I gave it a $1,000 scholarship years ago from money earned in teaching.

I ask pardon for this letter, and for addressing you at all, knowing how many appeals of this kind you must receive.

Very respectfully yours,
Wm. C. Todd, Dart. 1844.

The second act in this interesting narrative was Mr. Tuck's kind acknowledgment to Mr. Todd:

PARIS, September 18th, 1901.

W. C. TODD, ESQ., Atkinson, N. H.

My dear Sir:—

Your very interesting letter of June 25th regarding the New Hampshire Historical Society reached me some time ago, and has merited a more prompt reply.

You need make no apology for calling my attention to the present condition of the Society. On the contrary, I thank you for informing me so fully regarding the great interest taken in the formation and the development of the Society by distinguished sons of New Hampshire in the past, and of its straightened condition which ought not to be. I was among those who contributed last year to the building fund of which you speak, although my interest in the Society was not at all awakened as it has been by your letter. You, individually, have certainly been more than generous in your own contribution for the needed fund. I shall bear in mind all you have written me, and it may be that somewhat later I shall be in a position to aid materially in the good work which you so disinterestedly have taken up. It would certainly give me great pleasure if I felt able and free to do so.

In the meantime I shall be glad to hear from you further in detail as to what you think needs to be done to relieve the Society from its present distress, to assure its further existence, and to provide comfortably for its installation in a suitable new building, over and above whatever funds and means of support it already has in hand.

Thanking you for your letter I am yours very truly,

EDWARD TUCK.

William C. Todd then interested Benjamin A. Kimball both by correspondence and interviews, securing his masterful aid and co-operation which, once begun, continued to the end. Mr. Kimball had long been a member of the Society, and had served as President during the years 1895–1897, but, as he says, he had not in the stress of strenuous business and corporate activities given attention to the wants and necessities of the Society. He and Mr. Todd were old friends strongly attached to each other by college ties, as both were graduates of Dartmouth. In the notes prepared in response to my letter of July 4, 1917, Mr. Kimball says:

"My attention relative to the needs of the His-

torical Society was first aroused by a letter from Mr. Todd written October 28, 1901. It was from an old-time friend, bristling with acuteness and intelligence and suggestive of the unique personality of the writer."

William C. Todd possessed a quaint and unusual personality which, as Mr. Kimball says, Dickens ought to have encountered. "That squeaky, husky voice will never be forgotten." After a few letters and visits from Mr. Kimball to Mr. Todd, who, it should be remembered, was in bed and gradually nearing the close of life, Mr. Kimball received these letters which made so deep an impression and led to results so magnificent. The letter of October 28, 1901, was historically important. This famous letter contained references of the greatest importance to the New Hampshire Historical Society, to the State, and to Concord. "First of all there should be a new building for its valuable treasures." This thought presented by Mr. Todd gave Mr. Kimball his first positive conception concerning the condition and the future of the Society.

Atkinson, N. H., Aug. 6, 1901.

Hon. Benj. A. Kimball, Concord, N. H.

Dear Mr. Kimball:—

There is to be a meeting of the special committee on the new building, or addition to the present, Aug. 13. I doubt if I can be present but I trust you will attend. I am more and more persuaded that the Society cannot go on and prosper unless something is done. The Historical Societies all over the land are active, having new buildings, but the New Hampshire Society has for years been stationary. It took over 100 subscriptions last year, many of them out of the State, to raise the paltry sum of $5,000, showing how little is the general interest felt in the Society. I can do nothing more. I am comparatively unknown, with no influence; you are well known, and could raise any needed sum for almost any worthy object. My means are limited, but I have come to the conclusion that it is better to try and do some good with my little than leave it, as did Mr. Pearson, to feed hungry lawyers. I have just paid $50,000 for a needed hospital in Newburyport. I can think of no object of more use to the State, and especially Concord, than a new historical building, and you or any one else who will secure it will erect for himself a more enduring monument than any of granite.

The present building is old, infirm, is not fire-proof, and to add to it would make a deformity of

which no one would be proud. A new structure is needed, and the one who will secure it will make a proud name for himself with this generation and posterity. The whole matter was left open at the annual meeting, as I understood you wished. Hope something can be done, but it must be by money from those who have it and are willing to give. I have recently written to a wealthy gentleman but have had no reply.

I trust you are well after a most trying summer.

Very truly yours,

Wm. C. Todd.

Mr. Tuck replied by letter September 18, 1901. This is the letter referred to by Mr. Kimball as important:

Atkinson, N. H., October 28, 1901.

Hon. Benj. A. Kimball, Concord, N. H.

Dear Mr. Kimball:—

* * * I am pleased, also, that you are interested in the New Hampshire Historical Society. Nothing in New Hampshire, it seems to me, more deserves support than this Society, and nothing will make Mr. Carnegie, or whoever else may give to it, longer remembered.

Historical Societies, all over the country, are receiving increased attention, and no State has a richer field for investigation, and in no State has

there been of late so little interest as in New Hampshire, one of the oldest States in the Union. I think that there is much to be done, and, *first of all, there should be a new building worthy of the State and of Concord*, and I trust at no distant date it can be secured. You can do much more than myself because you are so much better known, and people have much confidence in your good judgment. Its past publications are very valuable, and the Society has material for more if it had the money. In the volume I recently published, in the article on Gen. Peabody, I stated that two thirds of the soldiers at Bunker Hill were from New Hampshire, and the State should have credit of it. The *Nation*, in a review of the book, states that this is strictly true, though it seems so impossible, and refers to a publication of the Society to substantiate it. I have faith that, sooner or later, this Society will have its wants supplied, for it is a *privilege* to aid it. I have some things in my mind, but they may have no practical result.

Please pardon this long, hasty letter. I presume you have such inflictions occasionally.

Very sincerely yours, with many thanks,

Wm. C. Todd.

Mr. Kimball calls this a famous letter, and it certainly deserves that name, but there was to be one more communication sent from the sick room

in Newburyport to Edward Tuck in Paris. Mr. Kimball refers to this in these words, "the last and very important letter on the subject of a new building was written by Mr. Todd some time in 1902, and it enlisted Mr. Tuck's interest in the proposition." Unfortunately that letter cannot be found, but its moving inspiration, soon to be revealed in actions, brings to our minds the pathos and force of the sick man's last appeal. "Mr. Tuck," Mr. Kimball says, "sent the letter to me with suggestions which later resulted in realities." Well may Mr. Kimball add, "this second letter of Mr. Todd's laid the foundations for one of the finest and most enduring structures of our time." Mr. Tuck acknowledged this letter, warmly and sympathetically manifesting his interest and willingness to contribute to the funds necessary to build on new foundations.

PARIS, December 9th, 1902.

HON. WILLIAM C. TODD, Newburyport, Mass.

Dear Mr. Todd:—

I am in receipt of your interesting letter of November 28th, which bears testimony to your

faithful devotion these many years to the welfare of the New Hampshire Historical Society, to which you have given so much both of your time and of your money. I trust that you may live to see your efforts crowned with success, and preparations made, if not fully completed, for the installation in a new and worthy habitation of the Society's valuable books and collections.

I have not forgotten the letter which you wrote me two years ago, and which first aroused an interest in my mind in behalf of the Society. It may be that I can some day make a contribution with others to aid in bringing together the necessary funds for the construction of the new building. I do not feel free to do so at the present moment, as I am committed in some other directions which will require all my available resources for the time being. Not the least among the reasons which would impel me to make a liberal contribution for this good purpose is the fact that you yourself have labored so disinterestedly in its behalf, and at the present time, even on your sick bed, are endeavoring to enlist the co-operation of myself and others in accomplishing the desired results.

I thank you for your letter and for your kind words regarding my father and myself, and I am, with best wishes for your restoration to health,

Yours very truly,

EDWARD TUCK.

This letter indicates on the part of its writer an

awakening interest in the Historical Society, and the disposition to contribute to its welfare.

December 8th, 1902.

Hon. B. A. Kimball, Concord, N. H.

My dear Mr. Kimball:

I will answer at once your letter this moment received, written on Thanksgiving Day, telling me of your call upon Mr. Todd at Newburyport, where I am sorry to learn that he is so ill. I am also in receipt to-day of a letter from him in fulfilment of his intention declared to you, which is full of the object he has so much at heart. His letter is an excellent one, most interesting and lucid, and from it I should not have supposed, had I not learned otherwise from you, that his illness was so serious. He even expresses the hope that he will meet me next year in the United States. I suppose he is a very old man now, and your fears as to his ever being able to leave his bed again I am afraid are too well founded. I should be glad to receive a copy of Mr. Todd's address at the annual meeting of the New Hampshire Historical Society, and also the report of the committee, of which he speaks but does not mention sending to me.

I have delayed replying to your letter of October 31st, in which you referred to the financial wants of the Historical Society, but not from any lack of

interest in the subject. I have a good many demands upon me just at the present time in other directions, but I shall not forget the necessities of your important Society, and it is possible that some time in the future I may feel free to make a contribution toward the fund required to place it in substantial and worthy quarters. * * *

EDWARD TUCK.

Mr. Kimball's letter, to which Mr. Tuck referred, after mentioning Dartmouth College and its business affairs, continued with a direct allusion to the Society which was undoubtedly the earliest communication on the subject in which these two friends had so deep an interest, and were destined to work out a result so splendid.

CONCORD, October 31, 1902.

* * * Just a few lines about the New Hampshire Historical Society, about which Mr. Todd, its President, has written you more or less, and concerning which Mr. Henry W. Stevens has talked with you, thinking you might be interested in it in the future or at your leisure. I know our people, far and near, are indebted for your philanthropic work, consequently do not feel like suggesting or asking your consideration of our valuable Society and its necessities, only to say that I intend, so far

as I am able, to assist towards obtaining a fine substantial building as a home for this venerable and valuable institution, which is capable of exerting such great influence upon the citizens of New Hampshire on account of its valuable collections of material.

In addition to what Mr. Todd has already donated ($5,000.00), I think he will join any enterprise to the end I have suggested, a new and permanent building.

He has recently given a fund for the establishment of a city hospital in Newburyport. At his request I am intending to call upon him at Newburyport, where he is ill at the present time. He may possibly talk over this matter. If so I shall be pleased to confer with him.

Mr. Todd and myself have held up the question of constructing an annex to the old building, which we and other prominent men of the State regarded as an unfortunate procedure.

Pardon me for mentioning the Historical Society question of a new building. I did so, knowing your interest in the Society as something that should be safely cared for and perpetuated to the honor of the old State and its distinguished roll of members.

With the kindest regards and best wishes for you and Mrs. Tuck, I am

Sincerely yours,

B. A. Kimball.

Mr. Todd's life was drawing to its close. He was unable to walk out or to welcome his friends, other than old friends, among whom none was closer than Mr. Kimball. During the year 1902 Mr. Kimball saw his old-time friend more than once, the last visit taking place late in that year and is recorded in these words:

"I visited Mr. Todd in Newburyport in the fall of 1902, where he was ill and confined to his room in Mrs. Spaulding's home. Knowing that I was expected, he was ready to receive me with many suggestions which he wished me to convey personally to Mr. Tuck relative to the New Hampshire Historical Society, as he understood I intended to sail for Paris within a few weeks. I remember distinctly his saying to me, 'I am impressed with the idea that you will find Mr. Tuck an important factor in the upbuilding of the New Hampshire Historical Society. His letter to me indicates most conclusively that his mind trends in this direction.' While I was with him I recall that he expressed his regrets respecting his gift of $50,000 to the Boston Public Library, which on reflection

he considered a mistake. He then said, 'My estate will not be sufficient to contribute more than the amount named in my will, and I want you to say this to Mr. Tuck.' So far as I am able to learn this was the last reference to the subject ever made by the loyal old man, for he died in June, 1903."

On July 30, 1918, Mr. Tuck wrote to me respecting the last letter from William C. Todd. "You ask me about the missing Todd letter. I doubt if there is one missing. I do not remember that he ever wrote me much more than what was in the letter or letters you have. His ideas were very modest. The project of a new building for the Historical Society pleased me from the start, and developed itself gradually in my mind after my annual conferences with Mr. Kimball into the greater scheme which we ultimately carried out. I was much impressed by Mr. Todd's passion, as I might call it, for the Society, and I was inspired by his example, rather than by his preaching, to accomplish on a grand scale what he had to leave undone at his death." Whether or not the letter which Mr. Kimball considered very important was

really written or has been mislaid is now an interesting surmise on the part of the historian. But we are certainly left without any doubt, by what Mr. Tuck has written, that he was inspired by Mr. Todd's passion and example.

Mr. Kimball now became an important person in planning and directing the greater scheme, as Mr. Tuck called it. Fortunate, indeed, it was to the donor and to the Society that Mr. Kimball assumed control of the work from the beginning and continued in charge until the completion. If my purpose were to sketch a biography in this connection, Mr. Kimball would occupy a large and deserved place, but such is not my design. Into this agreeable undertaking he entered with a full heart. Endowed with accurate architectural tastes, strengthened and enriched by long and varied experience, much reading and observation, Mr. Kimball was the ideal man for the work in hand.

In intelligent and thorough method of preparation, attention to details, calm judgment and sound sense few men in New Hampshire have been his equal. Here in Concord the railroad station, the

State Library, his Main Street residence attest the measure of his taste and devotion to the principles of attractiveness and usefulness in construction. No one recognized these gifts more clearly than did Edward Tuck. What he thought about those gifts and the confidence they inspired are set forth in his letter of August 11, 1917. Mr. Kimball belongs to the class of men known and recognized as masterful men in the management of public affairs, but in his case the master mind is agreeable and sympathetic. Tactful in his relations with others, receptive in mind, free from impulse, with an intelligence of high order, he proved to be in this great undertaking a helpful and suggestive representative of Mr. and Mrs. Tuck. Among his characteristics is the extremely valuable possession of a disposition that enables him to work with men and bring about the desired results. The preliminary and formative efforts of Mr. Kimball from the death of William C. Todd in 1903 to the laying of the corner stone six years later make a valuable and interesting chapter in personal achievement.

I venture to say that, from the hour when the vision of a splendid and creditable Historical Society building began to assume its exquisite features, to the moment when he handed the symbolical key to Mr. Tuck in November, 1911, the realization of the perfect work was never absent from his mind. And this means much when we think of the urgent business of banks and railroads and manufactures that beset him day and night without ceasing. But his heart was in this work and it brooked no rival. A new Society building erected on land in the central part of Concord near the State House was Mr. Kimball's purpose from the first, and to that end he directed his energy and influence. When asked what the probable cost of a new building would be he replied "not less than a hundred thousand dollars." This reply, made before the new site had been purchased or any plans had been drawn, proved to be a modest yet not an unwarranted estimate at the time. But the project gradually grew in shape and dignity as the months went on.

Mr. Tuck had now become actively interested through intercourse with Mr. Kimball who, in

those days, made an annual visit to Europe for rest and recreation. He naturally passed much time with Mr. and Mrs. Tuck at Vert Mont and in Paris. At one of these early visits the subject of the Historical Society came up in conversation, and the cost of land and building was mentioned, together with the suggestion advanced by a member of the committee that an appeal might be made to the generosity of Andrew Carnegie. Whereupon Mr. Tuck remarked "The New Hampshire Historical Society should not ask Mr. Carnegie for funds; they should furnish their own funds and build their own building." Another visit brought out the matter of the form and construction according to some sketch designs which Mr. Kimball had secured to show to Mr. and Mrs. Tuck. How completely the project underwent a change in the minds of those three friends of the Society is an interesting feature in the unwritten history of the Historical Society, for we now know that those early conversations and critical examinations of the tentative plans had to do wholly with a building to be constructed of brick.

"I considered this subject for several months," says Mr. Kimball, "and finally decided that the matter of material, so vitally important, ought to be explained in detail to Mr. Tuck; accordingly I made another visit to Paris." We now become informed concerning an act in the unwritten history of our Society, an act munificent and decisive. I believe that this beautiful building and its surroundings were due beyond any doubt to that all-important visit to Paris, when the vision of what might be possible to accomplish was revealed to two persons whose names will always be revered by ourselves and our successors. Mr. and Mrs. Tuck listened to Mr. Kimball's views and comments, examined and criticised the plans and sketches laid before them, discussed the momentous question of material, whether of brick or granite, thought over and studied the architectural form and features with care and devotion. This continued day after day, when new details, changes, modifications, ideas, were carefully considered. Let Mr. Kimball tell the story: "After a few days of discussion Mr. Tuck said, 'I think that the best

construction and design are none too good; we ought to have the best.'

"This important decision meant that the building should be Greek in design, so I said to my friends that this would entail many more technical details beyond what we had talked about, and would increase the cost very greatly. They exclaimed 'Certainly. We know it, but we want this building to be the best of its kind, so you proceed to erect it as suggested and avoid publicity as much as possible.'" No wonder that Mr. Kimball regards that visit as the *ne plus ultra* of his great endeavors connected with this work. The question concerning the kind of material to be used was settled by Mr. Tuck, whose love of his native Granite State was a part of his life, and who, realizing the appropriateness of granite, determined that the structure should be built of New Hampshire's famous stone. With a light heart and confident hope Mr. Kimball returned to Concord and reported to his friends the results of his conference which meant so much to the Society.

The purchase of the site now became a large and

difficult undertaking, in view of the funds in the treasury that could properly be applied to that purpose. The corner at State and Park Streets, which comprised the Rolfe house on State Street, the Mead house on the corner, and the Lapierre house west on Park Street, was the site selected and purchased. This purchase was made by Samuel C. Eastman, who had favored a central location from the beginning, and had been very helpful in assisting Mr. Kimball. "We gave our personal notes to pay for those lots, and it was some time before the reason of our action became publicly known, but once the purpose was understood prices went up rapidly, compelling us to furnish a large amount to secure the houses and land on Green Street." Here Mr. Tuck gave further proof of his abounding generosity by offering to contribute to the fund necessary to be raised for a suitable and spacious location. But the money question involved in securing the land continued to perplex those in charge of the matter, and to give them serious thought. The situation became intense as the proposed size of the building made it clear to all

that more land would be required to enlarge the site comprised in the original purchase.

When new sources of money contributions became urgent for buying the additional land, this was the way Mr. Kimball managed the situation. After the money in the treasury that could be used for the purchase of land had been appropriated there remained a further amount of $33,000 to raise before the purchase could be completed. Mr. Kimball and Mr. Eastman, courageous and resolute, borrowed on their own notes money sufficient to acquire the land and to vest it in the Society. I will now let Mr. Kimball tell how he finally secured the desired $33,000. "After many months the thought came to me of erecting a grand tablet in the building which should contain the names of the persons who contributed each a thousand dollars to lift the burden that weighed so heavily. I outlined my idea to Guy Lowell who quickly accepted it, and, in reply to my enquiry respecting the place of the memorial, suggested the space at the south end of the reading room, where it remains to this day.

After drawing several designs Mr. Lowell produced the design so much admired, and I set about to find a slab of the rare marble large enough to carry out my scheme. This proved to be extremely difficult. Finally I requested Timothy P. Sullivan to go into the market, and in New York he found, after long search, a block of marble suitable in size and quality for our purpose. The marble was sent to Boston where the cutting and lettering were artistically executed."

Owing to the exceedingly delicate and exacting labor necessary to the bronze lettering, the workmen suffered from eye strain, consequently the work was prolonged and made more costly than the first estimate. The accomplished architect had made a sketch of the finished tablet which Mr. Kimball exhibited to the score or more of invited contributors with the happiest results. In the opinion of Mr. Kimball this exquisite mural tablet, richly embellished with the names of generous men and women, is one of the finest objects in art construction to be seen in the building, and surpassed only by French's master sculpture over the main entrance.

As the building assumed its exterior form the interior features became the subject of thought, study and suggestion. In a really large sense this is an important part in our narrative. The consistency and the dignity of ornate beauty must be studied and made effective and agreeable to the eye. The interior should interpret itself to the intelligence and the understanding of generations to come. It should be coherent yet rich, impressive yet inviting. As we contemplate the noble beauty of the marble rotunda and the stairway, I wonder if we realize the labor and the devotion to artistic perfection, the continued application, and the profuse generosity that so dignify this house beautiful and contribute to our unwritten history. "During one of my visits with Mr. and Mrs. Tuck," says Mr. Kimball, "the elaboration of the interior was carefully and thoroughly considered. Mr. Lowell had made a beautiful set of drawings of the reading room, the lecture hall, and the rotunda, and to these we gave our thoughts day after day. The rotunda became the subject of our constant discussion. The drawings called for Old Convent

Sienna marble in solid blocks, especially so for the arches and the crown. Naturally, this design increased the cost very materially, but it gave a stateliness and magnificence that were quickly recognized and admired, and so the question about the marble arches and marble walls was then and there determined." Well may Mr. Kimball say that that decision put the final touch on the interior construction of the building. But another very important feature remained to be talked about and envisaged. The main entrance, its approach, and the architectural interpretation of the building itself became an impressive and intensive study.

Mr. Lowell had prepared a plan which did not fully satisfy Mr. Tuck or Mr. Kimball, not because the plan lacked beauty of design or artistic form, but because it did not give the imposing prominence to the entrance that the building seemed to require. Another plan followed later, and that plan worked out in granite and marble and bronze will always be a source of admiration and delight to all who behold it. In the meanwhile the grandest feature of all had been decided on. The genius

of the sculptor was invoked, enabling the architect to elaborate his entrance studies into harmonious and exquisite results acceptable to the donor and his friend. Wise and singularly appropriate was the choice of Daniel C. French, a native of New Hampshire, to execute the massive figures that dignify the main entrance.

And so the Historical Society building approached its completion, a model of what such a structure should be, and an illustration of man's benevolence seldom surpassed. Nor is this all. Far more than the material results was the rare intercourse springing out of the profoundest depths of mutual respect and confidence. Reflect a moment. While I may tell you that this gift to our Society cost Edward Tuck more than half a million dollars, I desire to add this, and I allude to it in order to emphasize what I have just said, that from the beginning to the day of dedication no written promise, condition, contract or agreement ever passed between Edward Tuck and Benjamin A. Kimball. The mind of the master builder with its living passion for the beautiful in

construction, touching the soul of a trusting friend beyond the sea brought about this superb consummation. At the dedicatory exercises Mr. Tuck, in his address of presentation, referred to Mr. Kimball in sincere and felicitous words: "It is fitting that I should make the presentation through you, for having from the inception of our plans the benefit of your superior judgment in all matters pertaining to construction, of your artistic taste, your vigilant watchfulness throughout the work, and your public spirit in devoting to it your valuable time, I decided to provide for the erection of something more monumental and ornate than a simple library building. It is due to you, also, that for its plan and construction we secured the services of the distinguished architect, Mr. Guy Lowell." And as a supplement to those words of appreciation I wish to record among the unwritten facts in this narrative that Mr. Kimball from first to last contributed liberally and often to this great work, and time and expense were cheerfully given that perfection in all respects might be attained.

I have now told the interesting story I wished to

tell, firmly believing that its preservation in our archives is something we owe to others as well as to our Society. We may, I believe, search in vain to find another achievement so splendid as this. Rich with facts, incidents, and circumstances, our beautiful home is its own model. Vision, perception, endeavor, patience, perseverance are recounted in granite and marble and bronze, which shall endure in commemoration of the benevolence of the generous donor. Our days are numbered but our gratitude shall not be measured by our shadows on earth. Let all our members present and to come acknowledge with a full heart the debt the New Hampshire Historical Society owes to Edward Tuck and Benjamin A. Kimball.

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